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Statement by Ann Clwyd, MP

I first visited East Timor between the 7th and 8th March 1989, with an all-party group of MPs at the invitation of the Indonesian Parliament. After what I saw and heard, my interest in East Timor was followed by a visit to the United Nations in New York where I gave evidence to the UN Decolonisation Committee about my experiences there. That concern has continued and this report is an attempt to show Britain's responsibility for the continuing human rights situation in Indonesia and East Timor.

The British Government has attracted much criticism for its favourable treatment of the Suharto regime in Indonesia, which has a reputation as one of the world's worst violators of human rights, and which has just been named as the world's most corrupt country[1]. **Indonesia has benefited from substantial increases in British aid out of all proportion to its relative poverty and its 'good government' record.**

Much of the criticism of the British Government arises from the continued strengthening of its ties with a regime which persists in its illegal occupation of East Timor, and which has been responsible for widespread human rights abuses in East Timor over a period of twenty years (see note 1 at the end of the Introduction).

The Government's response to such criticism is that: **'The United Kingdom has not recognised the annexation of East Timor by Indonesia, and we do not**

[1] By the independent watchdog, Transparency International, based at the University of Gottingen, Germany - *Asia scores bottom mark in corruption stakes,* The Guardian, 14/8/95.

therefore fund government to government aid projects in East Timor'[2]. It has also proclaimed its commitment to **human rights** as one of the central planks of its 'good government' programme[3].

Following her recent visit to KENYA, Lynda Chalker, the Minister for Overseas Development, was commended in the UK for her stand on human rights and democratic reform. During the visit, Baroness Chalker stated: 'We have concern about treatment of opposition parties, about the treatment of the press. We have heard very disturbing reports about some legal cases. We know the horrors of the ethnic tensions that this country went through. And we know the evils of corruption.'[4]

In stark contrast, when she visited INDONESIA just a few weeks earlier, Baroness Chalker was conspicuously silent on the issue of human rights abuses and corruption. Yet one of the purposes of Baroness Chalker's visit was to sign an aid related loan agreement for £80 million.

At the recent annual meeting of Indonesia's aid donors in Paris, officials from Baroness Chalker's department agreed to further increase Britain's aid to Indonesia. Apart from Japan, Britain was the only major bilateral donor to agree to such an increase.

This cannot be justified on the basis that the aid is helping the poor. Indonesia is not one of the world's poorest countries. It only just rates as a low income economy according to the 1994 World Bank World Development Report. The Indonesian Government and the World Bank predict that per capita income will be in the region of $1,000 by the turn of the century[5], giving the country a comfortable position in the middle-income economic category.

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2 Hansard, 10/2/94, col.456.

3 Foreign and Commonwealth Office including ODA Departmental Report 1994, p.58.

4 *Britain slashes aid to Kenya,* The Guardian, 29/7/95.

5 Indonesia Survey, The Economist, 17/4/93 and Jakarta Post, 17/11/93 and 15/9/94.

In any event, the British aid programme in Indonesia is not designed to help the country's poorest people. According to the Independent Group on British Aid, only 5% of British aid worldwide is used for poverty reduction projects [6]. According to the UNDP, **only 2.9% of aid from all of Indonesia's donors is devoted to human development priorities**[7].

Neither during Lynda Chalker's visit to Indonesia nor during the Paris meeting was any mention made of the appalling human rights record of the Indonesian Government nor of its illegal occupation of East Timor. Indeed human rights and East Timor were specifically excluded from the agenda of the Paris meeting.

Why then is the Overseas Development Administration's (ODA) policy on aid so profoundly inconsistent?

This report answers that question.

6 Letter to the Times, 16/11/94.

7 UNDP Human Development Report 1994, p. 74, table 4.6.

British butchery

ANN CLWYD reports on continuing Tory collusion with the vindictive Indonesian regime.

THE five young East Timorese men who took refuge in the British embassy in Jakarta recently, fearing for their lives at the hands of the Indonesian security forces, provided further evidence (as if we needed more) of the bloody and repressive Indonesian regime. Portugal granted the five political asylum, while Britain was dragging its heels.

What remained unsaid was that the British Government has, through its aid programme, helped to perpetuate and legitimise oppression in Indonesia. The reality is that the claimed commitment of the British Government to human rights in East Timor is non-existent, wilfully discarded in the rush to better its record as a major arms supplier to the Suharto regime.

The asylum seekers petition declared that "military brutality has become a fact of everyday life in East Timor – a military brutality which has consisted of sudden arrest, rape, intimidation, terror and slaughter...". That extends to the Indonesian National Police who have very little independent power. They are essentially a paramilitary, as opposed to civilian, force. In insecure areas like East Timor, they are wholly under the command of the local military. Yet our Government has been providing UK training awards for Indonesian police officers since 1979 and meeting some of the costs of training courses in Indonesia itself.

The Foreign Office says that it hopes that the assistance it provides "will influence all receiving it and help develop respect for human rights in East Timor". Curious, then, that officers receiving scholarship awards do not undergo training in human rights law, that the British consultants working under the project have no formal training in human rights law and neither do they provide advice on such law.

In the United States, in evidence to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in 1992 about military education and similar training funds for Indonesia, the Executive Director of Asia Watch, said: "These police are part of the armed forces who are responsible for torture on a routine basis. There is no indication that officers trained here are any less willing to condone abusive behaviour than other officers. To give them additional training with American funds as long as the structure in which they operate remains unchanged would be utterly irresponsible." Britain's aid to Indonesia clearly falls into this "utterly irresponsible" category.

INDEED, the British Government ignores the reality. In my report, *British Aid to Indonesia – the Continuing Scandal*, I detailed the career of Colonel Mochammed Hindarto, trained in Britain in the mid-1980s. In a sworn statement on August 10 1995, before a Lisbon solicitor, Luciano V. Conceicao, an East Timorese now exiled in Portugal, recollected some of the abuses committed while Hindarto was chief of police of a region which includes East Timor, from 1992 to 1993.

Conceicao described the victim, accused of involvement in the demonstration which preceded the Santa Cruz cemetery massacre. During questioning, the man was hit in the face with gun stocks, kicked and severely punched. He was kept naked for the first five days of his detention, tortured and burned on his face and body with cigarette butts.

During the 40 days of his detention, he was repeatedly beaten and hit with bars of iron and gun stocks. "His head was the target, consequently he is mad now" said Conceicao. He was only one of the many examples mentioned. The truth is that the British Government does not require the police training programme to develop respect for human rights at all. The aim is to ingratiate the British Government with the arms buyers of Indonesia. Human rights are not an issue.

The five asylum seekers said they too had witnessed atrocities by the Indonesian security forces, including the incident in 1991 when the army killed up to 270 demonstrators at a funeral in Dili, East Timor's capital. The British Government did indeed have words with the Indonesian Government after this atrocity: to sign a Memorandum of Understanding, related to defence contracts, just six days after the killings.

THAT action of the British Government speaks much louder than the half-hearted words of condemnation of the killings. This "business as normal" reaction probably played a significant part in reassuring the Indonesian Government that it could afford to play down the scale of the atrocities in that cemetery in 1991.

Indonesian rule over East Timor is not recognised internationally, either by the United Nations or the United Kingdom and is considered illegal. Our Government claims it "does not therefore fund government to government projects in East Timor". However, in March 1990, the Regional Physical Planning Project for Transmigration was completed. It involved a grant of £2.5 million and included dumping government supporters from Jakarta into East Timor.

While Lynda Chalker, Deputy Foreign Secretary, raised human rights issues on a recent to Kenya, she was conspicuously silent on her visit to Indonesia a few weeks earlier when she signed an aid-related loan agreement for £80 million.

So, while human rights violations have continued in Indonesia where free trade unions and newspapers are banned and activists and union organisers are jailed and killed – and while East Timor continues to be occupied illegally – the British Government agrees to increase aid to Indonesia.

The National Audit Office has just agreed to investigate my allegations that British aid is being used illegally in Indonesia, just as it did when I reported the Pergau Dam affair to them some years ago. I am confident that once again in this case, the Tories will be found guilty.

● *Ann Clwyd is Labour MP for Cynon Valley.*

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